

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 7A

WASHINGTON TIMES
29 April 1987

Pakistani to press for radar aircraft

J By Richard Beeston
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan Sahabzada is coming to Washington next month to press for U.S. radar aircraft that would provide early warning against escalating air attacks on his country from neighboring Afghanistan.

An urgent Pakistani request to lease such planes was discussed yesterday by Michael Armacost, the State Department's under secretary for political affairs, and Pakistani Ambassador Jamsheed Marker.

India, meanwhile, announced that it, too, is sending its foreign minister, Narain Dutt Tiwari, to Washington to seek a suspension of all U.S. military aid to Pakistan to force a halt in its nuclear program.

India's Defense Minister Krishna Pant declared on Monday that the government is debating whether to build a nuclear bomb to meet the threat of an "Islamic bomb" from Pakistan.

A State Department spokesman said yesterday the United States had agreed in principle to facilitate Pakistan's acquisition of an airborne early warning system.

The spokesman said that discussions had included the possibility of leasing arrangements but that no decisions had yet been made on any

particular system or on the methods of transfer.

It was not clear whether the discussion on leasing radar planes involved Boeing's super-sophisticated AWACS — Airborne Warning and Control System — or other early warning aircraft.

Whether AWACS, which would cost about \$900 million if purchased outright, or an alternative less expensive system is provided, its early deployment would require the participation of U.S. Air Force personnel. But the surveillance aircraft would be flown far back from the Afghan borders and protected by Pakistan Air Force fighters.

Pakistani officials confirmed that Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo wrote to President Reagan asking for the early leasing of American aerial surveillance planes.

A leasing arrangement was clearly Pakistan's second choice. It has long wanted to purchase such planes but cannot, at present, afford them. Also, leasing would not be as time-consuming, given the urgency of Pakistan's request in the face of escalating air raids by Soviet and Afghan planes.

But leasing the system could cause problems in Congress because of present regulations which would require the administration to

certify that the United States has more AWACS planes than it needs.

The air attacks on border villages in Pakistan was one of the issues discussed at the State Department yesterday. Islamabad has acknowledged that it cannot protect itself from such attacks because it lacks an early warning system.

So far this year Pakistan has suffered over 1,000 casualties.

This, together with an increase in terrorist bombings by infiltrators from Afghanistan designed to destabilize Pakistan is heightening opposition to the government of President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq.

Last week a move in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to penalize Pakistan for its nuclear program by withholding \$100 million of U.S. military aid was narrowly defeated.

The vote followed an appeal from Mr. Armacost, who called on senators not to cut back aid at a time when Pakistan was taking "a whale of a battering" from Soviet-backed Afghan forces.

Yesterday there were reports from New Delhi that the nuclear policy review was being generally welcomed by a growing bomb lobby.

Pramod Mahajan, member of Parliament for the right-wing Bharatiya Janata [Indian People's] Party said he welcomed the review announcement by Defense Minister Pant "half-heartedly... half-hearted because the government doesn't seem to have made up its mind fully yet."

Mr. Mahajan said India should go for a nuclear bomb "even if Pakistan does not possess one."